



Children and Family Services
Training Center
Department of Social Work
University of North Dakota

Fostering Communications



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Building a Network of People in the Foster Care System

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Foster Parent Training Survey for 2008-2009

By Jason Moug

The Children and Family Services Training Center is beginning the process of planning 2008-2009 foster parent trainings around the state. With this in mind, this year we decided to enclose the Foster Parent Training Survey within the *Foster Communications* newsletter. All we ask of you, the foster parents, is to fill it out and return it to us. The postcard on which this brief survey appears has pre-paid postage so all you have to do is fill out the information requested and drop it in the mail.

This survey is going out to all foster parents in the state of North Dakota. The information you provide will help us offer regional foster parent trainings that are relevant to those of you fostering children in your home. **Please complete the survey and drop it in the mail by March 7, 2008.**

Last year was the first time we put together a statewide survey to determine what types of training appeared the most relevant to you, the foster parents. Once the surveys were returned, we sorted the information by regions of the state and by topic areas. The compiled information was then taken to one of four statewide meetings and utilized to make decisions on what topics would be focused on for this year (2007-2008). The information you provided was very helpful in prioritizing the training topics and it gave those at the meetings a guideline to follow.

In 2007, the meetings were held with our child welfare partners in Bismarck, Minot, Grand Forks, and Fargo. These meetings were designed to bring together individuals with a common interest in planning for foster parent training. The 2008 planning meetings will be held sometime in late March. If you would like to attend and help plan the upcoming trainings, please contact your licensing agency/caseworker and let them know of your interest. More information regarding the specific dates

and times of these meetings will be sent to licensing agencies across the state.

If you have any questions about the survey please feel free to call the Training Center at (701) 777-3442. We thank you all for your continued commitment to the children of the state of North Dakota.

National Foster Parent Association 38th Annual Education Conference

Walk Me Home...to the Place I Belong

May 12 – 16, 2008
Sheraton Atlanta Hotel
Atlanta, Georgia

www.NFPAonline.org
(800) 557-5238
email: info@NFPAonline.org

New Features for the CFSTC Website

If you have never checked out the Children and Family Services Training Center website or have not recently surfed our site, we invite you to take a look. We have updated our calendar which makes navigation easier and includes numerous training opportunities for foster and adoptive parents across the state. Also, our resource library has completed an overhaul with the addition of a search engine. We have hundreds of resources available, including videos and DVDs, books, and digital curricula that can supplement your training needs. Check out has never been easier with on-line ordering now available. Please take a few minutes to check out the website at www.cfstc.und.edu.

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Presidents Corner

By James Schnabel

Greetings and Happy New Year from the board of the NDFAPA.

This past October we once again held our annual conference in Mandan at the Seven Seas. At our conference we had several good and insightful presenters who delivered timely and valuable information. During our business session we presented and passed new updated by-laws so we now have a new name, the North Dakota Foster Adopt Parents Association. We also presented our website to all those in attendance; our web address is www.caringforkidsnd.com. I would encourage all of you to check out our website and use it to list your upcoming events.

We are currently planning next year's conference in **Fargo** and are open to any suggestions that foster or adoptive parents may have for training sessions.

We continue to see burnout among foster parents. I would encourage you to find a support system and friends to help you keep your marriages and relationships strong and healthy. Many of the children in foster care come with high demands so we all need to figure out ways to balance the needs of these children with our own needs. This is often easier said than done. I feel that every foster parent needs a mentor and should develop and grow those types of relationships. When we share the load it is lighter.

The NDFAPA is your association and is here for you. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact myself or any of the board members and we would be glad to help.

From the State Office

By Don Snyder, Administrator,
Foster Care Program



Transportation of Foster Care Youth

On October 11, 2006, the following policy was issued (PI-06-17) regarding transporting foster youth.

Effective immediately, transportation of foster care children provided by individuals other than licensed foster parents must be approved in advance by the legal custodian, in consultation with the regional supervisor. The legal custodian and regional supervisor must ensure the individual requesting permission to transport the foster care child has a current driver's license and appropriate insurance coverage.

Effective immediately, this policy is rescinded. It is no longer a requirement for the legal custodian and regional supervisor to verify the license and insurance of individuals prior to transporting foster youth. The custodian does have the right to check any transportation providers for such license and insurance, if it is determined necessary.

Guidelines When Considering Guardianship

When a custodial agency is planning guardianship as a permanent placement alternative for a dependent child, an assessment must be made of the placement resource. The assessment should address whether that resource could meet the needs of the particular child. (A guardianship assessment outline is available in the Subsidized Guardianship Manual Chapter 623-10.) This information, including the results of a fingerprint-based criminal background check of all adults living in the home, must be made available to the court considering the guardianship issue.

Guidelines for Discussion/Consideration:

1. What are the parameters of the proposed guardianship? Is the potential guardian willing to make decisions for education, health care, mental health services, visits with the biological family (if appropriate), etc?
2. Is the proposed guardian willing to work with a parent who maintains some parental responsibility?
3. Is the proposed guardian willing to report periodically to the court granting the guardianship, if required?
4. What is the financial plan for the child? Are there financial resources available to the child (i.e. guardianship subsidy, SSI/SSA)? Will the guardian's medical insurance provide for this child? If not, what is the plan for medical coverage?
5. Does the family have adequate information regarding community resources to meet the needs of the child?
6. What is the status of the parental rights of the birth family? What recourse does the birth family have in dissolving the guardianship? The guardian should consider the emotional and financial costs of defending against such a challenge.
7. Discuss the proposed guardian's responsibility should they choose to dissolve the guardianship; i.e. financial responsibility, where will the child go?
8. Discuss the guardian's responsibility and involvement with the child and/or the child's custodian if the child re-enters foster care; i.e. the guardianship does not have to be dissolved, the guardian is not responsible for child support.
9. If there is an eventual plan for adoption, does the guardian understand the process of adoption, the costs involved, and who would be responsible for those costs (i.e. the cost of termination of parental rights, if not already completed; the cost of the adoption home study, legal fees for adoption finalization)?
10. Discuss the unavailability of adoption assistance for the child once a guardianship is established and a public agency is no longer the custodian.

Advise prospective guardians to get detailed legal advice on the scope of their responsibilities and liabilities from their legal advisor.

It is also in the best interest of the child and family if, prior to establishing a guardianship, the child is placed with the prospective guardian and provided appropriate services, supports and supervision, for an adequate amount of time, to ensure a positive permanency plan. Upon recommendation of the supervising agency and concurrence by the potential guardian, the custodian could move the court to grant guardianship.

FOSTER CARE FOCUS

The following list of programs and agencies along with descriptive information is intended to offer foster parents and other readers, valuable resources to assist you in working with children and families in the Child Welfare System. You are invited to explore the websites and find information for your professional growth and development.

Kids Are Waiting

Kids Are Waiting is a collaboration of leading child welfare, family, judicial and other organizations promoting federal foster care financing reform. The campaign supports maintaining the current federal-state partnership while providing states with greater incentives and flexibility to provide supports and services that can keep families together, reunify them quickly and safely, and, when that is not possible, help them leave foster care to join safe, permanent families through adoption or guardianship. Led by The Pew Charitable Trusts, an ever-growing number of local, state and national partners are working together so that our most vulnerable children don't spend their childhoods waiting for the families they deserve. For more information visit the website at kidsarewaiting.org.

The Alliance for Children and Families

The Alliance for Children and Families, a nonprofit association, was formed by the 1998 merger of Family Service America and the National Association of Homes and Services for Children. The Alliance represents over 370 nonprofit organizations across the nation that provides services and economic empowerment to children and families. Alliance agencies cover a wide spectrum of providers, including a diversity of faith-based organizations and non-sectarian agencies. Together, these organizations deliver more than \$2 billion annually in services to more than 8 million people in nearly 6,700 communities across the United States. For more information visit www.alliance1.org.

Camp To Belong

Camp To Belong is an international organization, and has been actively reuniting brothers and sisters placed in separate foster, adoptive or kinship homes through Summer Camp Programs and year round events since 1995. Our primary goal is to provide a sense of belonging to youth as individuals, and as siblings, giving them opportunities to share childhood memories together, among other youth in the same situation. For additional information, visit www.camptobelong.org.

Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute

The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to raising awareness about the tens of thousands of orphans and foster children in the United States and the millions of orphans around the world in need of permanent, safe, and loving homes through adoption; and to eliminating

the barriers that hinder these children from realizing their basic right of a family. The Congressional Coalition on Adoption (CCA) was created in 1985 as a bicameral, bipartisan caucus of members of Congress dedicated to improving adoption policy and practice, and to focusing public attention on the advantages of adoption. In 2001, the CCA's active co-chairs created the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) to more effectively raise Congressional and public awareness about the issue of adoption. Senator Larry Craig, Senator Mary Landrieu, Congressman Jim Oberstar, and Congresswoman Ginny Brown-Waite currently serve as both the co-chairs of the CCA and the Congressional directors of CCAI. For more information visit www.ccaainstitute.org.

Foster Care Alumni of America

Foster Care Alumni of America is a national, independent nonprofit organization created and led by alumni of the foster care system. We estimate that, in the United States, there are 12 million alumni -- adults who have spent time in the foster care system as children. Our association's mission is to connect the alumni community and to transform policy and practice, ensuring opportunity for people in and from foster care. FCAA's members come from all 50 states and include alumni of care, supportive allies and interested organizations. Chapters are now being formed across the country. From first hand experience, FCAA members understand the pressing importance of improving the foster care system as a whole, and for each individual child. We support connections and collaboration within the alumni community and with other individuals and organizations by building meaningful and effective partnerships. For more information visit our website, www.fostercarealumni.org.

FosterClub

FosterClub is the national network for young people in foster care. FosterClub's mission is to provide encouragement, motivation, information, education, and benefits for foster youth. At the FosterClub website, kids ask questions and get answers. They discover other successful former foster youth, share opinions about their foster care experience, get recognition for overcoming obstacles, and more. FosterClub's publications give youth tools to help them succeed, and its events give youth an opportunity to get involved and grow. In addition, FosterClub produces outreach tools designed to provide child welfare professionals effective ways to communicate with youth in care. For more information visit www.fosterclub.org.

Fostering Results

Fostering Results is a national, nonpartisan public education project designed to raise awareness of issues facing children in foster care. Commenced in June 2003,

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FOSTER CARE FOCUS

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the campaign operates at the national level and in select states to highlight the need to address the federal financing mechanisms that favor foster care over other services and options for children and families and to improve court oversight of child welfare cases. Fostering Results engaged key constituencies, including influential national and local leaders, judges, child welfare directors, caseworkers, and advocates for youth and foster, birth and adoptive families to call attention to the financing and court issues at the heart of the foster care system recommendations crafted by the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care. The initiative is supported by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to the Children and Family Research Center at the School of Social Work, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. For more information visit www.fosteringresults.org.

Generations United

Generations United (GU) is the national membership organization focused solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. GU represents more than 100 national, state, and local organizations and individuals representing more than 70 million Americans. Since 1986, GU has served as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. GU acts as a catalyst for stimulating collaboration between aging, children, and youth organizations, providing a forum to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation. For more information visit www.gu.org.

National Council For Adoption

The National Council For Adoption (NCFA) has been a champion of adoption since its founding in 1980. NCFA is a research, education, and advocacy organization whose mission is to promote the well-being of children, birthparents, and adoptive families by advocating for the positive option of adoption. Whether as an advocate for state laws that promote sound adoption policy, a resource for federal officials and policymakers about appropriate federal adoption and foster care initiatives and reforms, a diplomat for sound international adoption policy, or a source of adoption facts and education, NCFA is devoted to serving the best interests of children through adoption. For more information visit www.adoptioncouncil.org.

National Foster Parent Association

The National Foster Parent Association is a national organization that strives to support foster parents and is a consistently strong voice on behalf of all children. The mission of NFPA focuses in the following areas: to bring together foster parents, agency representatives and community people who wish to work together to improve the foster care system and enhance the lives of all children and families; to promote mutual coordination, cooperation and communication among foster parents, Foster Parent Associations, childcare agencies and other

child advocates; to encourage the recruitment and retention of foster parents; and, to inform the membership and general public of current issues regarding foster care. For more information visit: www.nfpaonline.org. **Please note that this is a new website address for NFPA.**

National Indian Child Welfare Association

The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) was established in 1983 as the Northwest Indian Child Welfare Institute in response to the need for trained Indian child welfare workers. In 1987, it became regional, and in 1994, the organization became national in scope and was renamed the National Indian Child Welfare Association. NICWA has grown from a two-person training project with an initial budget of \$60,000 to a successful national organization with comprehensive information exchange, community development, and public policy services to serve tribal programs and communities on services and issues affecting Indian children and families. NICWA defines its primary constituency as tribal governments and urban Indian social service programs that serve Indian children and families and, in particular, the front-line staff people who work with them. In addition, we educate the non-Indian community to be aware of our needs and services. NICWA accomplishes its mission and goals by working with Indian and non-Indian people and organizations that share our vision of strong Indian families and communities. For more information visit www.nicwa.org.

North American Council on Adoptable Children

Since its founding in 1974 by adoptive parents, the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) has been dedicated to the mission that every child deserves a permanent family. Through education, support, parent leadership capacity building, and advocacy, NACAC promotes and supports permanence for children and youth in foster care in the United States and Canada. Some of NACAC's core activities include empowering parents to support one another as they raise children adopted from foster care; working with policymakers, administrators, and grassroots advocates to reform the foster care system and improve outcomes for children and youth; and disseminating information that will help child welfare professionals and adoptive families better support vulnerable children. For more information, visit www.nacac.org.

Prevent Child Abuse America

Since 1972, Prevent Child Abuse America has led the way in building awareness, providing education and inspiring hope to everyone involved in the effort to prevent the abuse and neglect of our nation's children. Working with our chapters, we provide leadership to promote and implement prevention efforts at both the national and local levels. With the help of our state chapters and concerned individuals like you, we are valuing children, strengthening families and engaging communities nationwide. For more information visit www.preventchildabuse.org.

“What were you thinking?”

By Dawnita S. Niles, Region IV ILP Coordinator

Chances are if you work with, parent, know, or have heard of a teenager you’ve uttered (or at the very least thought) those very words. Teens do, say and think many things that make us all wonder what they were thinking. It turns out that on some levels, they weren’t thinking, which is what you suspected all along. But it is not for the reasons or in the way you think it is. Dr. David Walsh, in his book *Why Do They Act That Way?* unlocks a small piece of the mystery. I’ll try to explain it here, first in technical terms.

We have to start with the amygdala. It’s a fairly small section located deep within the brain. Its primary function is to make a person feel pleasure. It allows (and encourages) a teen to think and say “Wow – that seems like a really good idea. I definitely want to try it”; whether it is driving fast, experimenting with drugs/alcohol, sex, skipping school, etc. The amygdala wants us to enjoy life to the fullest. Now here’s the surprise; the amygdala is really well developed in the average teenager. It is why they are so willing to try new things and take risks; which can be a good thing or a dangerous thing.

Another part of the brain that figures in to the “What were you thinking” equation is the prefrontal cortex, located in the front of the brain. This is the part of the brain that says “you know, it really sounds like a lot of fun but we could get seriously hurt” or go to jail, hurt someone else, fail in life, etc. It is the logic center of the brain. And guess when it is fully developed?! It isn’t until around the age of 25, according to Dr. Walsh’s research. Explains a lot, doesn’t it?!

So in the less technical words of Dr. Walsh, “The pedal is to the metal and the brakes are on back order”.

Do we allow youth to take all these risks then? No, our role as IL coordinators, foster parents, parents, case workers, etc. is to recognize that they don’t have their “brakes” yet. We need to help them learn to think through decisions, be there for them to discuss it (without becoming all preachy), to let them make mistakes (when the consequences aren’t life threatening) and help them learn from those mistakes. Consequences are critical to their learning, but they have to realize that you are there for them to trust and talk with, without being criticized or laughed at.

So the next time you think or say “What were you thinking?” realize they were thinking exactly how their brain is wired to think. So instead, say “I know your brain is figuring out this logical thinking thing, but for the time being, let’s talk things through a little more often. There will still be a consequence for your actions. But let’s see if we can figure out a better decision to make next time.”

If you would like to learn more about what Dr. Walsh has to say, you are welcome to borrow a copy of the book. Just contact your IL coordinator and they can get it from me.

Walsh, David, Ph.D. (2004) *Why do they act that way? A survival guide to the adolescent brain for you and your teen.* New York: Free Press

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota (PCAND), along with the national office Prevent Child Abuse America, is launching what will become an annual awareness event, **Pinwheels for Prevention**. You may obtain a packet of materials containing supporting materials for this campaign as well as parenting materials that you can copy and distribute in a variety of venues.

Most of the materials will be available to download from the PCAND website at: www.StopChildAbuseND.com. Materials that cannot be copied are available for reorder by calling 223-9052 in the Bismarck area, or 1-800-403-9932 ND toll-free; or email to: pcand@btinet.net.

What’s up with North Dakota Kids?

138,000 children – 0-17 years

87% - White; 9% - American Indian;

4% - All other races

8381 – Live Births

590 – Births to single mothers 12-19 years old

9% - Children in ND are uninsured

2785 – 3-4 year olds in Headstart (2007)

6743 – Suspected victims of Child Abuse & Neglect

4862 – Children impacted by Domestic Violence

39,388 – Children 0-17 living at or near poverty level

ADVOCATE FOR KIDS:

- Ask your local, state, and national representatives what they are doing to help improve the health and well-being of children in our state.
- Vote for people who make children and youth a policy priority.
- Lead efforts to have early support/prevention services for young families in your community.

(Most figures are from 2005; exceptions noted – Kids Count/North Dakota 2007 Overview of Children’s Well-Being in North Dakota & 2007 Fact Book. Above information supplied by PCAND.)

Federal Tax Benefits for Foster and Adoptive Parents and Kinship Providers

By Pete Tunseth

The National Foster Parent Association (NFPA), in collaboration with Casey Family Programs, is producing the Federal Tax Benefits for Foster and Adoptive Parents and Kinship Caregivers. The 2007 tax year guide will be available in early February 2008. You can look for the guide on the NFPA website at www.nfpaonline.org.

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Federal Tax Benefits for Foster and Adoptive Parents and Kinship Providers

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In addition to the guide, the Internal Revenue Service has recognized the special tax issues surrounding foster care and approached NFPA to partner on a pilot project to support foster parents. The pilot project will take place in King County, Washington, in collaboration with the King County Tax Coalition. United Way of King County (UWKC) serves as the lead agency for the King County EITC Campaign, which includes partners such as the IRS, Seattle Jobs Initiative, Puget Sound Labor Agency, AARP, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and many others. The campaign has about 300 volunteers, who speak 28 languages, to operate the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) sites. The training guide and onsite guide for the volunteers will include information specific to foster parents, adoptive parents and kinship caregivers. Subsequent to the success of the pilot project, the national office of the Internal Revenue Service will consider a nationwide plan proposal.

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